

with Prime Minister Morrison of Australia as well. Any day Congress has the opportunity to strengthen working relationships with two of our Nation's closest friends and allies is a good day indeed.

Our meetings today come at a time when our most important trans-Atlantic and trans-Pacific alliances are facing growing threats to collective security and to prosperity.

In the face of Russia's meddling, China's expansionism, a reinflamed War on Terror, and further threats to democracy and human rights around the world, the steady leadership of committed partners is more crucial than ever. So I specifically wanted to thank our friends in Australia and the United Kingdom for their years of loyal friendship that have underpinned coalition operations in Afghanistan and our joint efforts elsewhere to check the most pressing threats to our nations and to the kind of world that will help us thrive.

I will be reaffirming my own commitment that America must be the reliable, committed, and globally engaged ally that our closest friends deserve.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on another matter, over the past several months, American families have had to contend with a historic amount of painful, painful inflation. This summer, we saw the prices for core personal consumption soar at the fastest pace in nearly 30 years. Last month, the Producer Price Index notched its steepest year-on-year jump in more than a decade. All across the country, across the economy, families and businesses are being hit hard.

One measure of construction materials is reporting that homebuilders are facing materials costs that are 22 percent higher than just last year—22 percent higher than just last year. Homeowners and renters are approaching a fall and winter in which heating costs are projected to reach a 13-year high. Eighty-six percent of respondents told one recent poll they were either “extremely” or “very worried” about inflation.

Now, this is exactly what Republicans, independent experts, and even liberal economists warned would happen if Democrats started ramming through massive, massive inflationary spending. Back in the springtime, Larry Summers, the top economic adviser to both President Clinton and President Obama, warned at the time that runaway spending could “set off inflationary pressures of a kind we have not seen in a generation.” And, of course, that is exactly what has happened.

Well, just ask any working family in this country about their last trip to the gas station, the grocery store, or the car dealership. Inflation has gotten so bad on Democrats' watch that it has wiped out every ounce of the average

American worker's pay growth during this economic recovery and then some. Annual real wage growth is negative even though employers have been handing out raises because—because—of inflation.

Remember, at the start of the year, working Americans had an economy that was teed up for a roaring recovery. So when Washington Democrats rolled out their first springtime spending spree, even the Washington Post cautioned that “the improving picture is raising questions about whether the stimulus bill is mismatched to the needs of the current moment.” That was the Washington Post on the so-called rescue package that passed back in March.

You might think that the disastrous consequences of Democrats' last spending binge for working Americans might give our colleagues some pause about the next one, but, alas, no such luck. Behind closed doors, they are putting together another, even more reckless taxing-and-spending spree. They want to take the last bill, which Democrats called the most leftwing law in American history, and actually dwarf even that.

Massive tax hikes on Americans that will hurt families and help China. Let me say that again. Massive tax hikes on Americans that will hurt families and help China. A socialist transformation that nobody voted for last year. Another invitation for even more painful inflation that will hit working Americans right where it hurts. The American people don't want it, and Senate Republicans won't support it.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, now on a related matter, yesterday evening, Senator SHELBY and I introduced a continuing resolution that could pass the Senate and prevent a government shutdown. Our legislation would fund the government through December. It would restore the defensive assistance for our ally Israel that House Democrats stripped out to appease some of the worst elements of the far left.

As one frustrated Democratic Congressman stated yesterday, “A missile defense system [like] Iron Dome defends civilians from missiles. Hence the name. Only in a morally inverted universe would this be considered a ‘controversy.’” That is a House Democrat describing the action yesterday of House Democrats.

Our bill also removes the debt limit language that Democrats have known since July—since July—will not receive bipartisan support from Senate Republicans. As one of my colleagues put it succinctly, if Washington Democrats want to jam through trillions of dollars in reckless spending all by themselves, they can raise the debt limit all by themselves. If they want to do one, they will need to do the other. To do one, if they need to do one, they will do the other. It is that simple.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. McCONNELL. Now, one final matter. The American people are watching a terrible sight unfold down on our southern border. Many thousands of people, largely from Haiti, are literally huddled together underneath a bridge in Del Rio, TX, just across the Rio Grande. Temperatures have been in the triple digits. The conditions are unsanitary and inhumane.

This nightmare is the direct result of the leftwing policies and leftwing messages pushed by the Biden administration. They say their approach to immigration is the compassionate path, the one that reflects the soul of America. They are wrong. In no way does it honor America's soul or uphold American values to tolerate a major border security crisis and unending—unending—humanitarian disaster that appear to be permanent features of life under the Biden administration.

This false choice is the constant refrain from the left. Either we adopt Democratic policies that lure people into literal squalor and effectively open our borders in the middle of a pandemic or else we are somehow betraying the spirit of the Statue of Liberty? That is simply nonsense.

Legal, orderly immigration has been a proud strength of our country and a core pillar of the American way of life literally for generations. That is completely different than Washington Democrats sabotaging our border while publicly advertising a catalog—a catalog—of socialist benefits they say they will provide for illegal immigrants who manage to make it in.

When President Biden was sworn in, thousands and thousands of people took his far-left campaign rhetoric seriously and began streaming toward our borders. One person at the border directly told the Washington Post they came because they heard “President Biden was letting people in.”

First, in the springtime, his administration called this a seasonal surge. Well, so much for that. We have had more than 150,000 border apprehensions every single month for the past 6 months. Encounters usually fall off during the hot summer months, but on President Biden's watch, the opposite has happened.

Listen to one recent example of the chaos. A few days ago, the Biden administration filled a big bus with illegal immigrants from this encampment. The bus set out for somewhere else in Texas. But according to news reporting, partway through the journey, the illegal immigrants on board revolted, took control of the bus, and broke out. But more broadly, it sounds like catch-and-release may be the de facto Biden policy.

Just this morning, the Associated Press reports that according to government officials, “Haitian migrants camped in a . . . Texas border town are being released in the United States . . . on a very, very large scale . . . undercutting the Biden administration's

public statements that the thousands in the camp faced immediate expulsion."

Nobody believes Democrats that this lawlessness, chaos, and human suffering is the fair and compassionate way to govern our country. Nobody buys that. An average of recent surveys shows that only 36 percent—36 percent—of the country approves of President Biden's handling of immigration, while 56 percent disapprove.

Look, Americans know a train wreck when they see one. Our citizens deserve better than this failure—utter failure—of leadership, and so do the people Democrats are luring here with a mirage.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Senator THUNE and I be allowed to complete our remarks before the vote is taken.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF FLORENCE Y. PAN

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, this week, the Senate will vote on Florence Pan's nomination to the District Court for the District of Columbia.

She is highly qualified, with more than a decade of experience on the bench. If confirmed, she would be the first Asian-American woman to serve on that court.

She graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Pennsylvania and received her law degree with distinction from Stanford.

After clerking on the Southern District of New York in the Second Circuit, she decided to pursue a legal career in public service. In 1995, she was selected for the prestigious Bristow fellowship in the Office of the Solicitor General. After completing her fellowship, she served as attorney in the Appellate Section of the Criminal Division of the Justice Department and senior advisor to the Department of the Treasury.

Beginning in 1999, Judge Pan worked as an assistant U.S. attorney for the District of Columbia for 10 years. In this role, she litigated local and Federal courts at the trial and appellate level.

In 2009, President Obama nominated her to serve on the DC Superior Court. She was confirmed with unanimous support by the Senate.

Years later, President Obama nominated her to serve on the DC district court, and her nomination was re-

ported out of the Republican-controlled Judiciary Committee by a voice vote. Unfortunately, she didn't receive a floor vote in time, though lawmakers on both sides of the aisle recognized that she was eminently qualified.

Since 2009, Judge Pan has presided over more than 650 trials: criminal cases, family court cases, civil cases. She was unanimously rated "well qualified" by the American Bar Association. She has the strong support of Congresswoman ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON, who submitted a statement for the record and described her as an exceptional nominee.

Last month, she was voted out of the Senate Judiciary Committee on a bipartisan vote of 18 to 4.

What is more, the historic nature of Judge Pan's nomination will help build a Federal bench that reflects full diversity.

I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting her.

CORONAVIRUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, less than 2 miles from this Capitol, there are 666,000 small white flags stretching across the National Mall like a sea of suffering and loss. Each of these flags represents an American life lost to COVID—666,000. Let me tell but one of them. Her name was Candace Ayers. She lived in my hometown of Springfield, IL.

Early last March, as soon as they could, Candace and her husband Terry received their second coronavirus vaccinations. That was a day of joy and relief for the family because Candace lived with rheumatoid arthritis, which weakened her immune system.

In July, she traveled to Mississippi—a State, sadly, with one of the lowest vaccination rates—to console a friend who had lost her husband. At the time, COVID infections were at a low point, and the Delta variant was just starting, so Candace thought she would be safe, having been vaccinated.

Soon after the trip, she tested positive for COVID. She was hospitalized and moved to an ICU, and she spent the last few weeks of her life on a ventilator.

She died on September 3 at the age of 66, leaving behind her husband, their son and daughter and 5-year-old triplet grandchildren.

In the obituary in my hometown paper, her family wrote: "She was vaccinated but was infected by others who chose not to be. The cost was her life."

I read that to my wife the morning it was printed and said I have never seen a sentence or two like that in any obituary.

Experts call what took Candace Ayers' life a "breakthrough" COVID infection, meaning an infection that occurs after an individual has been vaccinated. Breakthrough infections are typically mild, but can be devastating for immunocompromised people like Candace.

With the rise of the Delta variant, it is not just the elderly or immunocompromised who are at risk. Children made up only 3 percent of COVID cases at the start of this pandemic. Today, children account for 27 percent of new COVID infections, and the school year is just starting.

We are in the midst of yet another wave of this pandemic. COVID is once again overwhelming America's health system, and the rate of COVID infections and deaths are dramatically higher in the areas of lower vaccination.

An article in last Friday's Chicago Tribune tells the story in Illinois. Last Thursday was the fourth day in a row that every ICU bed in Southern Illinois was filled. In a 20-county area—home to 400,000 people—there were no ICU beds available.

Doctors, nurses, and first responders are working around the clock to care for sick patients, but after 18 grueling months, they are reaching a breaking point. And with our healthcare system pushed to the brink, everyone is feeling it.

If you live in Southern Illinois and you have a heart attack, a stroke, a serious accident, or a life-threatening condition, bad news: There are no ICU beds available for you. Hospital staffs in those areas have to call hospitals sometimes hundreds of miles away in Nashville, TN; St. Louis, MO; Kansas City, MO, to try to find a bed.

Compare the situation to Chicago, some 300 miles away but a world of difference. COVID infection rates are starting to decrease. Public health officials are hopeful they are finally turning a corner.

Why the great disparity between the Chicago regional area and Southern Illinois? One reason: vaccinations. In Chicago, two in three adults are fully vaccinated against COVID. In Southern Illinois, the figure is only one in three.

So much of the suffering and expense could be avoided if we could take the politics out of the COVID debate and stop the spread of misinformation that is literally killing people. As Candace Ayers' family would tell you, the most important thing is that more people get vaccinated. Vaccines are safe, effective, and free—and widely available to anyone over the age of 12.

Here is a statistic that should trouble everyone. The New York Times tracks COVID vaccinations around the world using figures supplied by national governments. Where do you suppose the United States of America ranks globally compared to other countries on vaccination rates? Well, you would guess the top three, right? The top 10 for sure. How about top 20? You would be wrong. Last week, the United States ranked 55th globally for the percentage of people vaccinated. We are just behind Cambodia.

And in the wealthiest Nation on Earth and in the country that led the research and development in finding these vaccines, that is sad; it is inexcusable; and it is deadly.